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March, 2006

### **Chairman Walsh to be honored for Outstanding Victim Advocacy**

Massachusetts Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh will be presented the Criminal Justice Award for Outstanding Victim Advocacy at the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance [MOVA] annual conference at the State House on April 27.

The conference is part of the annual nationwide push for victim awareness known as National Crime Victim's Rights Week, observed in April. At the national level, the main event of the week is an award ceremony held in Washington D.C. in which individuals and organizations demonstrating exemplary victim service and support are recognized.

Parole Board Director of Victim Services, Thomas Clark said he nominated



Ex-offender Robert Byrd (left) and South Middlesex Opportunity Council Program Manager Jeff Feeley share in Mr. Byrd's successful reentry (story on page 5)

Chairman Walsh for her extraordinary dedication to the rights and needs of victims. At a time when most Agencies are cutting back, he said, Chairman Walsh

has doubled the size of the Victim Service Unit. "Anyone who goes to a hearing can see her compassion." (continued on pg. 5)

### **Unique Program Teaches Literary Lesson**

Behind the walls of the Luther Lockett Correctional Complex in LaGrange, Kentucky, inmates can be heard speaking in a way that defies the typical image of prison life.

Since 1995, inmates have been participating in Shakespeare Behind Bars, a program that uses Shakespeare's plays to teach inmates empathy. The program was started by Kentucky Shakespeare

Festival artistic director Curt L. Tofteland. For now, it operates only at Luther Lockett, a medium security adult prison housing approximately 1,200 men, many who have been convicted of serious and violent crimes, such as murder, rape, and armed robbery.

Mr. Tofteland's next goal is to develop a similar program for parolees and ex-offenders who have left prison.

"I think of Shakespeare Behind Bars as preparation for getting out of the institution and being successful," he said. "What I hear about from people on the outside are feelings of alienation and loneliness, of not being able to be strong against the temptations that may have led them to incarceration...Human beings have to be a part of something. (Continued on pg. 6)

## Chairman's Column

By Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

In many newsletters, I have the opportunity through this column to speak about the various changes that are ongoing in this agency. Most of the time, these are significant changes, opportunities, or learning experiences that we have been fortunate to be a part of. There have been so many changes within parole, whether it is about the Interstate Compact, recent hires/promotions, programs that are working well and are innovative, the list goes on and on. While we might deserve some criticism in certain areas of the agency, no one could ever fairly criticize the Massachusetts Parole Board for being an agency that has stayed stagnant during the past few years. The question that I think is fair to ask, though, is "does the change matter?" In other words, even with things changing in parole, how can we tell if our improvements are making a difference?

Researchers would say that there are a number of ways to measure change. Since I have no expertise in this area (in fact, I barely passed microeconomics in college!), I have my own impression and opinion of the differences that this Agency is making.

The first sign that we are making a difference and that the changes are meaningful can be found in our staff. New hires have added significantly to the strength of our agency and there has been a noticeable difference since new staff have come on board and helped out. Whether it be improvements in the Victim Services Unit and their ability to be in the community and work on outreach, or the creation of the Reentry Unit, every new employee has made a difference in our daily operations. We are excited about the ten new transitional officers that began their employment with the Agency this month and look forward to their contributions. The addition of new staff re-energizes existing staff that have been with the agency for some time and also provides different opportunities for existing staff to be promoted or transferred. Again, the promotion of many individuals has resulted in significant benefit as both Institutional Services and Field Services have seen dedicated employees being advanced in the agency.

Second, there are signs of improvements that have a noticeable difference that come under the category "things." The SPIRIT system is one of those things. This computer system has allowed our staff to obtain real time information about the offenders that are being supervised in the community. The ability to track offenders and analyze statistics is invaluable. In so many ways, this computer system brings us in line with other agencies and allows us to do our daily jobs more efficiently and professionally. The same could be said for the variety of equipment purchases that have been made over the years: whether it is vehicles, tablets, digital cameras or other similar items, each one assists our staff in getting the job done. The difference is clear, as now information flows more quickly, transportation of offenders is easier, and the digital cameras allow us to capture important evidence such as signs of domestic violence, drug paraphernalia, etc. Again, these are all tools that I notice are making parole stronger and more effective in its mission.

Third, are the more esoteric signs of change that can be seen in the numbers. These have to do with population that we serve (both offenders on parole supervision and those who have ended their sentence but still need reentry assistance). For example, did you know since its inception in October of 2004, 931 offenders have been processed through the RRC's and 500 of them have asked for further assistance. From May 2005 to February 2006, the substance abuse counselors have made 3,647 service referrals for parolees and 680 service referrals for reentry clients.

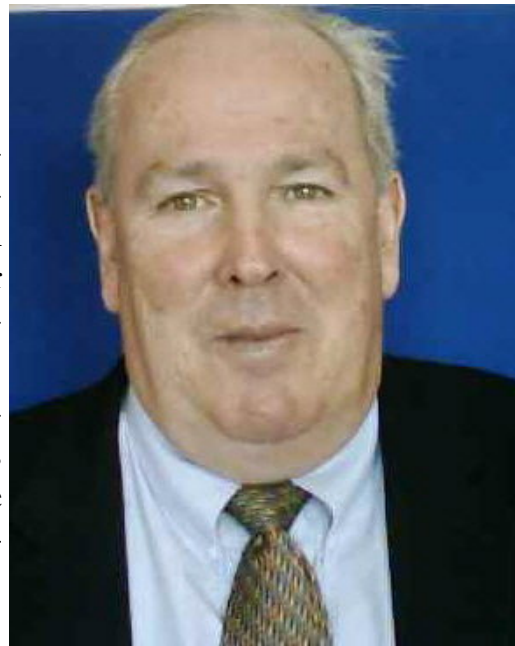
Looked at through a different lens, when broken down, the total VOI/TIS program service hours for substance abuse services was 13,725 and there has been over 3,800 service hours for job training and placement. There have been 210 placements in structured residential housing for offenders under the VOI/TIS grant. Again, these are services and opportunities that did not exist prior to the creation of the RRC's.

These numbers demonstrate that a lot is going on at the various reentry points in the continuum. It ranges from assistance with the basics such as clothing and food, to referrals, to anger management or substance abuse counseling. The sheer volume of referrals and placements indicate not only the work that is being done but the need for it to continue. So, in conclusion, it is clear that our efforts are making a difference in our mission, which is to promote public safety through the responsible reintegration of offenders to the community through supervised conditional release. Like everything else, we still have many more opportunities and more change that needs to be accomplished. I would like to thank each and every one of you for making this change happen!

## ***Spotlight: Parole Board member Thomas Merigan***

**Thomas Merigan** was appointed to the Massachusetts Parole Board in 2004. Prior to his appointment, he was a Supervising United States Probation Officer for more than 20 years. He began his career in criminal justice as a Massachusetts Parole Officer.

Mr. Merigan graduated from Western New England College with a bachelor's degree in business administration and American International College with a master's degree in criminal justice administration.



### **Why did you decide to apply for membership on the Parole Board?**

Prior to retiring from the United States Probation Department in October 2003, I wanted to continue to serve as a contributing member of the criminal justice community. As a supervisor for Federal Probation, I conducted numerous administrative and revocation hearings. I felt confident that my vast experiences as a hearing officer afforded me the confidence to apply for membership on the Parole Board.

### **What do you find most satisfying or enjoyable about being on the board?**

Participating with my colleagues in policy making for the agency is enjoyable. I must admit that the most satisfying aspect of my position is being able to reward deserving inmates the privilege of parole. Parole allows them the opportunity of a well-trained parole officer.

### **What do you think is the most challenging aspect of the job?**

Assessing the suitability of an individual that wants to be paroled presents many challenges. As board members, we must always be mindful of our primary responsibilities for public safety.

### **How do you think your prior experience has informed your work on the Parole Board?**

I began my career in 1974 as a state parole officer. I continued in the field of probation and parole with the United States Probation Department in 1978, retiring as a supervisor in 2003. Shortly thereafter, I was appointed to the Massachusetts Parole Board. My diverse experience in the state and federal systems has afforded me the unique opportunity to confidently accept the appointment as a Parole Board member.

## Did you know Mildred McDonald?

I am writing a biography of MILDRED ("Millie") McDONALD, a Massachusetts parolee from 1959 to 1970. If you knew Millie, I would like to talk with you.

I am particularly interested in talking with anyone who might have known Millie while she was a "student" at the FRAMINGHAM REFORMATORY FOR WOMEN during the period 1953-1959. I am also interested in any information regarding Millie's former PAROLE OFFICERS:

- Supervisor/Officer Katherine Quinn
- Officer Sally Geller
- Officer Eleanor O'Rourke

Or any former members of the PAROLE BOARD:

- Cornelius Twomey
- Patrick A. Menton
- Julian Steele
- Cecilia McGovern
- Katharine Sullivan

ALSO, I am interested in talking with former STAFF MEMBERS of the Framingham Reformatory during the period 1953-1959, particularly ALICE MAHER or Dr. EDWARD H. BARRY, or anyone who knew LORRAINE CLARK.

Finally...if you have old copies of HARMONY NEWS (the literary newsletter published by the reformatory's students) from 1953 to 1959, I would look forward to hearing from you. Please call, write or email me, William, at:

P.O Box 382443  
Cambridge, MA 02238-2443  
phone: (781) 251-0789  
email: WOppen5469@aol.com (please put "Mildred McDonald" in the subject line)

Thank you.



MAP graduates Jesus Encarnacion (left), Elizabeth Thompson, and Luis-Lorenzo Martinez graduated from the St. Francis House Moving Ahead Program on Friday, March 31. Mr. Encarnacion said MAP gave him the tools to help him become a different person from the one he was when he went to jail 15 years ago.

### The Civil Service Exam

for the positions of Field Parole Officer and Transitional Parole Officer (Institution) will be held Saturday, May 6, 2006. The registration deadline is April 10. Applicants may register either by mail or online at <https://www.csexam.hrd.state.ma.us/hrd/>. Payment is acceptable by money order, bank check, visa, or mastercard.

### Promotional Exam

Open to employees of the Massachusetts Parole Board who have been employed in a permanent or temporary status for the entire twelve-month period preceding the date of the exam.

### Open Competitive Exam

Open to anyone with at least three years of full-time or equivalent part-time, professional experience in parole or probation work, criminal justice, law enforcement, social work, psychology, vocational counseling or rehabilitation counseling, or any equivalent combination or the required experience and specified substitutions listed on the Massachusetts Human Resources Division web page, [www.mass.gov/hrd](http://www.mass.gov/hrd). (scroll down to Civil Service in the middle of the page and click exam info).



## Ex-offender makes strides in parole housing program

A **job fair** for hard to employ individuals will be held on **April 21 from 9 AM to 12 PM** at the Quincy Career Center, 152 Park-  
ingway,  
Quincy, Mas-  
sachusetts.

The job fair is being sponsored by the Massachusetts Parole Board, Quincy Career Center, The Work-  
place, and JobNet.

The event will include information sessions for employers on the **federal bonding program** and **tax credits**

Employers who would like to register for the event may contact Tony Cor-  
netta at 617-725-3319.

Robert Byrd is one of 70 ex-offenders in Massachusetts participating in a housing program sponsored by the Massachusetts Parole Board, and funded by a Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing [VOI/TIS] grant. The four-month program provides housing and rehabilitative services to offenders who are on parole or have finished their sentences. The Parole Board has contracted with six housing agencies in the Commonwealth to provide beds and services.

Mr. Byrd is not a parolee. He recently wrapped up his sentence after spending about 12 years in and out of prison for drug-related offenses. While still incarcerated, he heard about the Parole Board's Regional Reentry Centers [RRC's] and its housing program. He saw both opportu-

nities as a blessing and agreed to be taken to the Framingham [Region 9] RRC upon release. All ex-offenders discharged from state and county facilities are given the opportunity to go to one of eight RRC's throughout the state. RRC's offer parolees and ex-offenders assistance in finding jobs, housing, counseling, medical care, and other services.

Robert was provided with sober housing from the South Middlesex Opportunity Council [SMOC], and received substance abuse treatment from Substance Abuse Coordinator Steve Bisson at the Region 9 RRC.

SMOC staff are proud of Robert and feel that his recovery is going well. "Robert is a great guy to work with," said SMOC Program Manager Jeff Feeley. "He's

a hard working gentleman who has been successful at every turn. Robert is committed to a great recovery program and is well liked and respected by his peers," said Mr. Feeley.

Robert grew up in Hyde Park, Massachusetts. At age 15, he began experimenting with alcohol and marijuana and hanging out with a group of older guys. By age 17, he had started using heroin. It wasn't long before his attitude toward life began to change, he said, and he started to get in trouble with the law.

During his last prison term at MCI-Concord, Robert took a long look at his life. Instead of just counting down the days, he tried to prepare himself for the day of release. He spent a lot of time reading and developing  
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## Chairman Walsh praised for victim focus

*Continued from page 1*

Kristen Palma, MOVA Director of Public Affairs and Field Services, said that Chairman Walsh received an excellent nomination. "Her history as an advocate for victims is a model. We are happy to honor her."

Mr. Clark received notification of Chairman Walsh's award in a letter from MOVA Executive Director Janet E. Fine. "It is my great pleasure to inform you that the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance and the Victim and Witness Assistance Board has voted to present Maureen Walsh with the Criminal Justice Award at our annual Victim Rights Conference. We thank you for the compelling nomination you submitted."

Last year, this award was presented to Kathe Tuttman who has been an assistant district attorney in Essex County since 1989 and was named director of the Essex County family crimes and sexual assault unit in January, 2003.

Award recipients are chosen by a victim and witness assistance board. The board comprises the Attorney General who acts as chairman, two district attorneys, two victims, and MOVA staff. The entire victim community is invited to attend the conference, including safe plan advocates, district attorneys, parole, probation, and other public and private agencies. This year's featured guest speaker is Kim Meston, a survivor of human trafficking and a local and international human rights advocate.

The past year has been a busy one for the Parole Board Victim Service Unit, which added four new Victim Service Coordinator positions for a total of eight coordinators, with one assigned to each of the eight parole regions. Janice Dean, the Region 8 (New Bedford) Victim Service Coordinator, was promoted and is not the unit's assistant director. The agency will be conducting a second round of interviews on April 5 for the vacancy in Region 8.

Recently, Chairman Walsh initiated a policy allowing victims in the law enforcement community to attend victim access hearings and submit written input, even if they were not certified as victims by the Criminal History Systems Board. "Even though they're a victim, they never thought of becoming certified. Our goal is to get them certified, but if they choose not to, they still have the opportunity to write a letter and attend a hearing," said Mr. Clark.

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## 'Shakespeare Behind Bars'

(continued from pg. 1)

The question is, what kind of group do we want them to belong to?" he said.

Inmates who choose to participate in Shakespeare Behind Bars—usually about 12 at a time—memorize lines, practice their parts, and perform Shakespeare's plays in front of an audience of prisoners, family, friends, and sometimes the public. While it might appear odd for a convicted murderer to play the leading role in *Titus Andronicus*, Mr. Tofteland believes Shakespeare Behind Bars is one of the only rehabilitative programs that works for some offenders. "In order to change human behavior, you have to offer a variety of programs. Not every program works for everyone," he said.

About 150 inmates have participated in the program; 75 have completed a production and are considered program alumni. Of the alumni, about 16 have wrapped up their sentences and 10 have been paroled. No alumni have been rearrested, and only two of the parolees have come back on technical violations.

Mr. Tofteland, who raises the money to provide costumes, props, and scenic drops, and works at the prison 2-5 days per

week, says the program isn't about teaching inmates Shakespeare, or dramatic acting, although those lessons are inevitable. Above all, it's about redemption and using drama to facilitate changes in human behavior. Mr. Tofteland believes empathy can be learned through the examination of human behavior and conflict resolution, two features of Shakespeare Behind Bars. "Many inmates don't possess empathy. But I've seen empathy develop in inmates," he said. "The inmates have to take responsibility for the crime they committed. They have to look at the act and embrace it as something they did."

Shakespeare Behind Bars grew out of a program called Books Behind Bars that paired middle school students with inmates to discuss literature. A small group of inmates decided they wanted to not only read Shakespeare, but perform it as well.

"Discussing a novel is an intellectual process. Becoming a character in a play affects you on a much deeper level," said Mr. Tofteland.

The first inmates to participate in the new program faced some teasing and mocking from their peers.

To make matters worse, some of them had to play women's parts. "It took a great amount of courage on behalf of the early participants. There was a lot of ridicule on the yard," said Mr. Tofteland.

The teasing subsided as inmates got used to the idea and that saw that the program had some benefits. Most of the participants have pursued higher education; all graduates have gotten their GED's technical, or associate's degrees, said Mr. Tofteland.

Mr. Tofteland works with a group of about 30 inmates at a time, including actors and technical crew members. Participants commit to a rigorous rehearsal schedule of several days a week, and more time when a performance is nearing.

Since the program began, performances have included: *The Life and Death of Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello*, and *Twelfth Night*.

More information about Shakespeare Behind Bars is available at the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival website, <http://www.kyshakes.org/>

(Robert Byrd, continued from page 5) his spirituality. Robert is grateful to have access to the RRC and SMOG housing, and says that both places have made him feel welcome. He works full time at CVS and his goal for the immediate future is to save money for his own apartment.